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Sen. Brown fights to keep school bus safety inspections

LANSING – School children and Michigan’s School Bus Safety Inspection program moved one step closer to being protected from the governor’s budget ax, announced state Sen. Cameron S. Brown, R-Fawn River Township.

“Parents and students have the right to expect that the buses carrying our children to school are safe,” Brown said. “Losing just one child in an accident that could have been prevented with an inspection is too high a cost to justify the savings the state could have realized by cutting this program.”

The governor’s 2005-06 budget proposal called for the elimination of the State Police School Bus Inspection program, resulting in a projected savings of \$1.3 million. Additionally, the governor’s proposal also called for repealing the state law requiring school buses to be inspected.

Last year, state school bus inspections sidelined more than 2,000 of the state’s 17,800 buses (nearly 13 percent) for serious safety violations.

Brown chairs the State Police Appropriations Subcommittee that passed the department’s budget bill with the inspection program in tact.

“We were able to economize in other areas,” Brown said. “And we were determined to make our children’s safety a priority.”

Without the statewide program, schools that wanted to have their buses inspected would have had to perform those inspections on their own, without any additional money from the state. Or, if the governor’s proposal had been approved, the schools could have chosen to not conduct the inspections at all.

“The school buses in Lenawee County travel hundreds of thousands of miles a year, and so the partnership we have with the State Police and now the assurance of full funding of the bus inspections program will allow us to remain confident in the safety of our buses and our kids,” said Lenawee County Intermediate School District Superintendent Steve Krusich.

At Brown's direction, the Pupil Transportation Advisory Committee, made up of the Michigan Association for Pupil Transportation, the Parent Teacher Student Association, the Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools, the Michigan Association of School Administrators and more, is working with the department to find ways to make the program as cost efficient as possible.

"As a K-12 Superintendent, I am pleased that the Senate Appropriations Committee has listened to the concerns of the Pupil Transportation Advisory Committee as well as related organizations," said Rich Ames, Hillsdale Community Schools superintendent. "As a result, they have come to realize the importance of bus inspections to the ongoing safety of public education children. I hope the final budget will support the continuing Michigan State Police inspections of school buses."

The subcommittee budget bill now goes to full appropriations for consideration.

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Editors Note: An audio announcement from Sen. Brown is available on the Senate Majority Audiowire at: <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/audiowire/brown/index.htm>